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ABSTRACT

During school year 1991-92, the Whole Language Network (WLN) expanded to include 90 teachers in grades kindergarten through six in three school districts participating in the New York City Board of Education's Comprehensive Instructional Management System-Communication Arts project. The Network assisted teachers in using the whole language approach to language arts instruction and sought to empower teachers to assume a more active role in curriculum decision-making. Evaluation of the WLN during the 1991-92 school year focused on teachers' perceptions and assessment of the Network, the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effects of such changes on students' attitudes and achievement. In response to the evaluation: (1) large majorities of teachers reported that the WLN was valuable in helping them implement whole language instructional strategies; (2) almost all respondents reported that the instructional materials, support, and meetings and conferences proved valuable; (3) many teachers reported changes in their approach to teaching; (4) teachers reported trying a variety of "authentic" assessment techniques; and (5) teachers and staff developers reported that support provided by school administrators ranged from extremely supportive to lukewarm. Generally, differences in students' pre- and posttest scores in writing and reading were too small to be educationally meaningful. It was recommended that: greater effort should be directed toward helping teachers incorporate alternative assessment techniques into their classroom; more teachers from the same school should be selected; and school supervisors' understanding and support for the program should be increased. (Ten tables of data are included; rating scales for the writing samples are attached.) (RS)

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ED357334

OREA Report

COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM-COMMUNICATION ARTS: WHOLE LANGUAGE NETWORK
1991-92

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COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM-COMMUNICATION ARTS: WHOLE
LANGUAGE NETWORK
1991-92

CS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) was initiated during the 1989-90 year in Community School District (C.S.D.) 11 with a small group of teachers who were participating in the New York City Board of Education's Comprehensive Instructional Management System-Communication Arts (CIMS-CA) project. During 1991-92, the W.L.N. expanded to include 90 teachers in grades kindergarten through six in three districts, C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30. Its purpose was to assist teachers in using the whole language approach, which emphasizes the integration of language arts skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), as well subject area instruction, through the use of unifying themes. The project also sought to empower teachers to assume a more active role in curriculum decision-making.

Activities of the W.L.N. included monthly workshops during school time led by CIMS-CA staff developers, professional development conferences in the summer and December of 1991, and a drama component. Staff developers assisted network participants in selecting and obtaining materials, such as children's literature; they also visited teachers' classrooms to demonstrate effective teaching strategies and observe student activities.

The evaluation of the W.L.N. by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) during the 1991-92 school year focused on teachers' perceptions and assessment of the Network, the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effects of such changes on students' attitudes and achievement.

Large majorities of teachers reported that the W.L.N. had been valuable in helping them implement whole language instructional strategies--e.g., incorporating children's literature, making the reading/writing connection, integrating content-area materials, teaching process writing, using interdisciplinary and multicultural themes, and exploring alternative assessment trends.

Almost all respondents reported that they found the materials provided valuable, particularly the books of children's literature and reference materials about the whole language approach.

Teachers also valued the support given to them by their peers in the W.L.N. and by the CIMS-CA staff developers, who visited their classrooms, assisted with the acquisition of materials, and met with them individually and in small groups.

A large majority of respondents judged the monthly W.L.N. meetings with staff developers and their colleagues, and the two whole language conferences, to be valuable. Many teachers said that additional meeting time and the opportunity to visit other whole language classrooms would be beneficial.

Many teachers reported changes in their approach to teaching as a result of participating in the W.L.N. This included greater flexibility and a willingness to give children more control over the learning process. They also noted a greater sense of professional empowerment, a growing expertise in using the whole language approach, and heightened satisfaction with teaching. They also observed positive changes in students, including greater enthusiasm for learning, increased independence as learners, and improved language skills.

Teachers reported trying a variety of "authentic" assessment techniques, and expressed an interest in learning more about this approach to assessment, which emphasizes consideration of student performance in a variety of meaningful contexts over time, interaction with others, and self-assessment. Staff developers indicated that they had just begun to work with teachers in this area, and hoped to devote more time to it next year.

According to teachers and staff developers, the support provided to the W.L.N. by school administrators ranged from extremely supportive to lukewarm. In some cases, the only involvement of administrators was to schedule the release time for teachers to attend monthly workshops.

Teachers and staff developers viewed the small number of W.L.N. teachers within a single school as problematic, since this meant that there were limited opportunities for peer support within the school, and since students were unlikely to be in a whole language class in successive years.

Generally, differences in students' pre- and posttest scores in writing and reading were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, the positive trends in writing were encouraging. The overall negative trend in reading achievement in the elementary grades, while discouraging, was consistent with the decline in reading scores citywide from 1991 to 1992. Against this backdrop, the gains observed in grades 4, 5, and 8 in some CIMS-CA districts were particularly noteworthy. The positive trend in reading achievement in grade 7 was consistent with the increase citywide at this grade level.

Based on these evaluation findings, OREA makes the following **recommendations:**

- **Consistent with the whole language approach, greater effort should be directed toward helping teachers incorporate alternative assessment techniques into their classroom. These techniques should involve the use of language within authentic contexts, demonstrations of student competence with a variety of genres, and opportunities for students both to demonstrate and reflect on their progress over time.**

- As the W.L.N. continues to expand, efforts should be made both to select more teachers from the same school so as to reduce their feelings of isolation, and to add teachers of contiguous grades in order to provide greater continuity for students.

- Project staff should explore ways of increasing school supervisors' understanding of and support for the whole language approach; this might include requiring their attendance at key staff development activities.

- Since much of the success of the W.L.N. depends on teachers having appropriate materials, including children's literature and supplies for making books, project staff should continue to explore ways of making these available to teachers. This might include securing donations from publishers or alternative methods of funding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's High School Evaluation Unit (OREA/H.S.E.U.) of the New York City Board of Education under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei. Judith Eisler, Evaluation Associate, served as project manager for the coordination and preparation of this evaluation. Howard Budin, Evaluation Consultant, was responsible for site visits and report writing, and Barbara Shollar, Evaluation Consultant, coordinated test scoring activities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The goals of the New York City Board of Education's Comprehensive Instructional Management System-Communication Arts (CIMS-CA) program, introduced in 1980, are to develop a holistic communication arts curriculum and staff development program for kindergarten through grade eight. It emphasizes the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills using a thematic approach that cuts across subject areas. Previous evaluations of this project by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) have explored many issues, including teachers' use and assessment of the CIMS-CA curriculum, the staff development provided, and the impact of the program on students' reading and writing achievement.

Overall, the findings have indicated that teachers consider the curriculum to be interesting and motivating for students, and particularly useful for integrating language skills. They have judged the staff development--especially grade and faculty conferences, and demonstration lessons--to be helpful. Teachers who participated in the drama component, initiated in 1985-86, have consistently judged it to be a valuable learning experience for their students. CIMS-CA has also generally been associated with growth in students' reading and writing achievement.

Criticism has focused on the level of difficulty for less able readers and English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) students, the project's failure to update the curricular themes, and the

lack of adequate support from school administrators and supervisors.

During the 1989-90 school year, the project piloted the Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) in C.S.D. 11 with a small group of CIMS-CA teachers. The W.L.N. expanded during 1991-92 to include two additional districts--C.S.D.s 3 and 30. A total of 90 teachers in grades K-6 participated.*

The purpose of the Network was to assist teachers in understanding and using the whole language approach, an instructional strategy that is consistent with the holistic philosophy of the CIMS-CA curriculum. Accordingly, it encouraged teachers to use children's literature as a springboard for various communications activities, such as writing, reading aloud, and sharing ideas with classmates, and emphasized the importance of authentic learning contexts--i.e., instructional and assessment activities that engage students in meaningful tasks, rather than teach and evaluate isolated skills out of context. Another objective of the W.L.N. was to empower teachers to play a more active role in curriculum decision-making, including development of curricular themes and selection of materials.

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*During the first two years of the project's operation, teachers identified as particularly "effective" by CIMS-CA staff developers or by district and school staff were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. In 1991-92, the project expanded to include teachers, typically less experienced, who principals believed would benefit from participation.

The current OREA evaluation focused on this project component, in part because it is the most recent CIMS-CA initiative, and in part because its overall approach reflects national trends in instruction and assessment.

Project Activities

Monthly workshops. CIMS-CA staff developers in the three participating districts led monthly workshops for W.L.N. participants from 1:00-3:00 PM. (In previous years, these were held after school; during 1991-92, teachers were give release time to attend sessions on school time.) Importantly, while CIMS-CA staff developers "led" the workshops, they "led with a small 'l,'" as the project coordinator put it, that is, they provided direction and support but allowed participants to develop the agenda. Sessions typically addressed issues such as incorporating children's literature into lessons, developing themes that integrate language skills and content areas, making the reading/writing connection, and exploring alternative assessment trends such as portfolios. In C.S.D. 11, where the project has been operating for three years, there were separate workshops for first-, second-, and third-year teachers that focused on their particular level of experience with the whole language approach and interests. Follow-up assistance to teachers from CIMS-CA staff developers included demonstration lessons, individual and grade conferences, and classroom observations.

In addition, Network participants received a variety of instructional and resource materials to help them implement the whole language approach in their classrooms. In C.S.D.s 3 and 30, the staff developers purchased these with funds provided by the district; in C.S.D. 11, teachers received monies to purchase materials of their own choosing.

Other professional development activities. During 1991-92, there were two professional development conferences for participants of W.L.N. (as well as other selected school and district staff involved with the CIMS-CA program) to further strengthen their understanding and application of--or, in the case of school administrators, their support for--the whole language approach.

The project sponsored, in collaboration with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a five-day Whole Language Institute for Network teachers in C.S.D.s 11 and 30* during summer 1991. Workshops conducted by CIMS-CA staff developers addressed both theoretical and practical issues. These included an introduction to whole language concepts and classroom applications, use of learning logs, the selection and development of themes, techniques for implementing a literature-based classroom, instructional implications of reading and writing as thinking processes, and traditional as well as alternative assessment

*Lack of funds precluded attendance by C.S.D. 3 teachers; interested teachers in C.S.D. 9 attended the Institute, although there was no ongoing whole language staff development in this district during 1991-92 because of fiscal and management problems.

strategies. There were numerous opportunities for small grade-level group discussions and joint theme development that emphasized sharing and collaborative learning, in addition to whole group activities.

In addition, there was a weekend conference in December 1991 in Ossining, New York for Network teachers, school administrators, and key district personnel in C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30 (as well as a more limited number of school and district staff in C.S.D.s 9, 8, and 15). Approximately 168 people attended. Nationally known proponents of the whole language approach made presentations, and significantly, first-year Network teachers led some workshops. Presentations for administrators stressed the importance of their role in supporting teachers in implementing the whole language approach--e.g., purchasing appropriate materials, encouraging an interdisciplinary and integrated approach to instruction, and promoting the use of multicultural themes and enrichment activities.

DRAMA COMPONENT

The drama component has been in operation since the 1985-86 school year. As in previous years, the goals of this component were to introduce students to the world of William Shakespeare, increase their understanding and appreciation of the theater, provide them with an opportunity to attend a professionally produced play, and encourage creative expression. Teachers of grades 4-8 in CIMS-CA schools could involve their students in this drama experience.

The project consisted of three major parts: preparation for attending an off-Broadway performance of the play (this year, The Comedy of Errors), a trip to a live performance, and students' performance of a selected scene. The fundamental approach entailed using drama to engage students actively in the learning process. Interactive, personal experience is thus viewed as a vehicle for extending their understanding of literature and developing communication skills.

Teaching artists from the Theatre for a New Audience, whose services were contracted for through the central Board of Education, visited participating schools to conduct pre- and post-performance workshops directed at helping teachers to prepare their students, first for seeing the live production, and then for their own performances. This included model lesson plans utilizing role play, improvisation, language games, and other teaching activities designed to help children become familiar with the content and historical background of the play, stimulate their imagination, and foster an appreciation for the power of language. Using an abridged version of the play, teachers explored key themes, plot, characters, and Shakespeare's use of language with their students. Listening, speaking, writing, and appreciation of the play were emphasized. (Students were not expected to read the play.) Visiting artists also met with students to spark their interest in the play and to assist them in staging their selected scenes--e.g., developing their

characters, interpreting their lines, and using appropriate movements and gestures.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation of the W.L.N. project by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) focused on teachers' perceptions and assessment of the Network, the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effect of such changes on students' attitudes and achievement.

Sample Selection

For the qualitative portion of this evaluation, OREA included all teachers in C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30 who were participating in the W.L.N. during the 1991-92 school year, as well as the CIMS-CA staff developers in each of these districts.

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, evaluators selected a sample of W.L.N. classes, stratified by district and grade (K-6) for the analyses of students' writing achievement. In C.S.D.s 3 and 30, analyses of reading achievement were conducted for all W.L.N. students in grades 3-6 for whom pre- and posttest scores were available; in C.S.D. 11, all students in grades 3-8 were included (at the request of the program director) because this district has mandated the use of CIMS-CA in all schools and grades since 1987. Analyses of students' reading achievement were also performed for grades in C.S.D.s 9 and 8 that reflected mandates regarding the use of CIMS-CA in these districts as well.

Data Sources

The evaluation was based on the following data sources:

- an interview with the central CIMS-CA project director and the coordinator of the W.L.N. project;
- an interview with the CIMS-CA staff developer in each of the three districts participating in the project;
- questionnaires mailed to all W.L.N. teacher participants covering such topics as the usefulness of the W.L.N. workshops, changes in teaching practices, approaches to assessment, and additional assistance needed;
- review of relevant project documents;
- site visits to several W.L.N. workshops to learn more about the issues being explored and the concerns of project participants;
- analysis of differences in pre- and posttest writing scores of students in a sample of W.L.N. classes; and
- analysis of differences in the spring 1991 and spring 1992 Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.) test scores of a sample of students in W.L.N. classes and of students in selected grades in other CIMS-CA districts.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report of OREA's evaluation of the W.L.N. consists of five chapters. Chapter I provides an overall description of the project, focus of the evaluation, and evaluation methodology. Participants' perceptions of various project components and the impact of the W.L.N. on teaching practices and student attitudes are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III reports on the staff development provided to project participants, and Chapter IV presents findings on students' achievement in writing and reading. Evaluators' conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter V.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 49 teachers in the Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) returned the OREA questionnaire. This represented a response rate of 54 percent, considered excellent for a mailed survey. One-third of the respondents were teachers of kindergarten through second grade, and two-thirds taught third through sixth grade. While three-fourths of the teachers had been using CIMS-CA for two or more years, only one-third had previously participated in the W.L.N.

CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

According to CIMS-CA staff developers, the whole language approach is an extension and expansion of the CIMS-CA curriculum, which concentrates on teachers' development of curricular themes, and on the integration of different subject areas as well as language arts skills. It uses literature as a basis for teaching reading, and a process approach toward writing in a variety of genres.

Responding W.L.N. teachers indicated that the Network had been valuable in helping them to implement the instructional strategies. As Table 1 indicates, nearly all respondents (94 percent) found it moderately or very useful for incorporating children's literature into their teaching and making the reading/writing connection. Large majorities of W.L.N. participants (ranging from 79 to 86 percent also found the

Table 1

Percentage of Teachers Considering the Whole Language Network Useful for Various Purposes

Purpose	Rating		
	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Combined
Incorporating children's literature	78	16	94
Making the reading/ writing connection	63	31	94
Integrating content area materials	53	33	86
Using multicultural themes	41	43	84
Encouraging cooperative learning	57	27	84
Teaching process writing	50	33	83
Developing interdisciplinary themes	47	35	82
Exploring alternative assessment trends	42	37	79

- Large majorities of teachers (ranging from 79 to 94 percent) considered the Whole Language Network useful for the purposes intended.

Network useful for integrating content-area materials, teaching process writing, using interdisciplinary and multicultural themes, encouraging cooperative learning, and exploring alternative assessment trends. In exploring how they applied some of these concepts and strategies in their classrooms, one-third of responding teachers described ways in which they integrated social studies and language learning in themes they had developed, such as exploring apartheid while reading the children's novel Journal to Joburg or charting the miles that slaves had walked in escaping to Canada.

Teachers described a variety of ways in which they encouraged children's own writing, including students' diaries and handmade books, daily writing experiences on current themes, and collaborating on group books. Teachers also commented on their use of trade books, folktales, and other literature. Many teachers described their efforts to encourage children to work cooperatively, read to each other, and participate in book discussion circles.

Only seven responding W.L.N. teachers participated in the Shakespeare component of CIMS-CA. All of them found the related training activities useful, including the pre-play workshops to prepare children for seeing the play, the post-play workshops and artists' classroom visits intended to assist students with their performance, and the instructional materials (e.g., study guides, model lesson plans, theater games) provided to teachers during training activities. Teachers described many benefits to

children, including an understanding of Shakespeare, a sense of self-esteem derived from performing, a cooperative experience in preparing the performance, and the writing activities that grew out of the experience.

MATERIALS PROVIDED TO W.L.N. TEACHERS

Among the responsibilities of the staff developers were to provide teachers with instructional materials and references, as well as help in selecting additional materials for classroom use. Because of limited funds, staff developers maintained lending libraries of children's literature, thus giving all teachers access to a wide range of high quality reading materials. In cases where teachers received stipends to buy materials, staff developers assisted them in choosing materials and writing purchase orders.

The vast majority (92 percent) of responding teachers reported that these materials were very or moderately useful, and many teachers expressed their appreciation for the children's literature. Some sample comments:

- "My class and I enjoyed all the books we borrowed that we couldn't otherwise have obtained."
- "Keeping abreast of new materials is a huge task. The materials helped."
- "All the books were wonderful. To have a literature-based classroom you need books all around."
- "The books allowed me to do individualized reading, literature groups, shared reading on themes."

Teachers also commented on the value of the materials they received about the whole language approach:

- "Professional ideas as well as children's books were necessary and appreciated."
- "The readings from journals educate me...."
- "Outlines and anecdotes of successful teaching strategies were directly applicable to my own teaching."
- "I needed all the handouts I could get because I had to teach the philosophy of whole language to my fellow teachers."
- "Articles were given at every meeting. I would try to apply some of them to strategies in the classroom."

Also described as important by many teachers was the assistance staff developers provided by showing them how to use the materials, which often included coming into their classes and modeling techniques. Teachers noted that staff developers provided them with ideas, supported them in learning about whole language, and helped them in their classrooms. As one teacher expressed it, "Books, ideas, but most of all the support of [the staff developer] was useful."

Finally, teachers described the help given by their peers in learning about the program and the use of materials. One of the main purposes of the W.L.N. was to provide peer support, and this was a recurrent theme in teachers' comments:

- "I needed help with journal writing and found other teachers' materials helpful."
- "Support from the group is most important. Without the network I would have felt lost."
- "My colleagues shared materials and ideas at each workshop."

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CHANGES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teachers assessed changes in their own teaching that they attributed to their participation in the W.L.N. Some (N=12) reported that they were now developing their own themes. In connection with these themes, several teachers said that they required children to write more, and to read more varied kinds of literature. One teacher said that she had "weaned [herself] away from traditional textbooks," while another reported that she had "gotten away from the old basal teaching and looked closely for good literature for my students."

Another change involved teachers' attitudes toward teaching. Some teachers (N=12) noted that they felt more creative about their teaching, enjoyed it more, or felt more open to ideas. The following comments capture the sense of excitement that many teachers expressed:

- "I feel reborn and highly motivated."
- "I am much more open-minded and willing to try new ideas."
- "My whole attitude has changed. My class is much happier."

For several teachers this change in attitude was linked to feeling "more in charge, more professional."

A third change was the degree to which teachers felt involved in their work with other teachers. Several responses (N=6) indicated that teachers interacted more with colleagues in their own schools or others in the W.L.N. One teacher said, "I look forward to sharing ideas," while another commented,

"Colleagues have noticed my enthusiasm and asked me for ideas." One teacher noted that she had "grown to appreciate the support and suggestions of staff developers and peers."

Staff developers also described changes they observed in the teaching practices of W.L.N. participants, including teachers' becoming more familiar with children's literature, using cooperative learning, showing more flexibility in their teaching, and allowing students more choices.

Teachers also commented on the effects these changes had on their students. By far the greatest change they noted (N=31) was an increased interest and enthusiasm for reading. Typical comments reflect children's new love of reading:

- "My students' interest level toward books has changed tremendously. I would never get this level of interest if I were using the basal reader."
- "Children are very highly motivated and enjoy coming to my room."
- "They actively seek out other books by authors we have read."
- "Reading is fun. Instead of bribing with candy I hold books over their head. They love to take them home overnight."
- "The students are excited every time we begin a new book or a new theme."

Many teachers believed that this new-found enthusiasm for reading promoted learning. Several said that more reading had led to more writing. One observed that her students' "critical thinking skills have increased dramatically." Another noted that "students are developing skills that help them read novels instead of the short basal passages." One second grade teacher

said, "Students come to me with little reading skill. Some can now recognize second grade vocabulary!"

Many teachers (N=18) noticed changes in students' attitudes toward learning in general. Several observed that their students had become more active in the learning process, or that they had become self-motivated and independent learners. Some teachers noted an increase in the amount of cooperative behavior among children. The following comments illustrate these changes:

- "Levels of enthusiasm have increased greatly, as well as willingness to stick with it."
- "I feel their interest level has increased as they see connections being made."
- "The students have become more creative and are highly motivated."
- "They are enthusiastic, interested, and curious. They take more pride in their work."
- "There is more respect for individual differences."
- "The kids are happier, more interested, more motivated. They generate the topics. The skills are interdisciplinary and learning is more relevant. Children have become more actively involved in their learning."
- "They seem more eager to work with others and there seems to be less domination within the groups. Children are more eager to do their fair share."
- "The children have become much more active in their learning process."
- "They know how to work in groups and how to handle problems within groups."

ASSESSMENT

According to staff developers, one W.L.N. emphasis this year was the exploration of assessment strategies appropriate to the

use of whole language teaching. In this connection, staff developers in all three districts said that they encourage teachers to collect students' work in portfolios, to observe children at work, and to keep checklists of students' skills. Staff developers emphasized that the concept of alternative assessment was new to most teachers, and that the W.L.N. project expected to focus more on the use of such techniques next year.

Asked how they assessed students' language skills development, teachers cited a variety of techniques. The largest number of teachers (N=19) concentrated on students' oral communication. These teachers evaluated children's language skills through class discussions, peer conversations, literature response groups, oral reading, and the retelling of stories.

Other teachers commented on their assessment of students' writing. Seventeen teachers used students' journals, reading response logs, writing folders, and other writing activities. Some said that they collected children's work, including their writing, in portfolios or work folders for purposes of evaluation.

Some teachers (N=5) mentioned the use of informal teacher observations of students' work and conversations as an assessment technique, and an equal number noted that they did some of their assessment during regular conferences they held with their students, although how they applied such techniques to pedagogical practice was unclear. Two teachers used checklists

of skills. Finally, several teachers (N=5) mentioned the use of traditional tests such as the Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.).

A large majority of teachers (88 percent) said they would like to learn more about approaches to alternative assessment. Of these, one-quarter identified the use of student portfolios. Several teachers said that they had little knowledge of assessment options, and would be happy to learn about any alternative techniques. Other assessment techniques in which teachers expressed interest included questioning, journal writing, and miscue analysis. Apart from these specific assessment techniques, teachers wanted to learn more about how to evaluate writing deficiencies, critical thinking skills, and responses to open-ended questions.

III. SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Participants in the W.L.N. received support from CIMS-CA staff developers in each district, as well as from school administrators. This consisted primarily of monthly W.L.N. meetings with staff developers held in each of the three districts, conferences in summer and December of 1991, and in-school assistance such as classroom visits by staff developers and grade conferences.

Monthly Workshops

According to staff developers, the main purpose of the monthly workshop meetings was to provide opportunities for W.L.N. teachers to share activities and ideas. All of the staff developers described their own role at these meetings as that of facilitator, involving teachers in planning network activities and setting meeting agendas, and encouraging them to present topics and share classroom activities they had done with their students. In one district, monthly meetings were sometimes held in teachers' classrooms, so that teachers could demonstrate how, for example, they had organized their classrooms, set up reading centers, or displayed student work. Such meetings fostered a more personalized sharing.

Sometimes staff developers presented ideas for discussion, and occasionally outside speakers, such as publishers of children's books, attended meetings. Most respondents (82

percent) found these monthly meetings valuable in helping them to apply the whole language approach in their teaching.

Conferences

About half of responding teachers attended the five-day conference in the summer of 1991, and about two-thirds attended the two-day conference in December 1991. Attendees of these staff development activities judged them to be valuable (75 and 82 percent, respectively).

Staff developers described their roles in the summer conference as organizing each day of the conference into separate topics, such as the reading/writing connection and methods of assessment, and facilitating the presentation of the topics. According to the staff developer from C.S.D. 30, the number of district W.L.N. teachers attending the summer conference increased from eight the previous summer to 35 in summer 1991, and the conference provided valuable opportunities for these teachers to meet together and support one another.

The December weekend conference, according to one staff developer, was "a wonderful opportunity to see what teachers throughout New York City are doing." Children's work was displayed, W.L.N. teachers conducted workshops, and publishers and invited educators spoke.

In-school Assistance

One of the main roles of the program's staff developers was to provide in-school assistance to W.L.N. participants. One staff developer described visiting teachers' classes as his

primary responsibility. Staff developers taught demonstration lessons at teachers' requests, modeled reading aloud to students, consulted and planned with teachers during free periods, made classroom observations, and held follow-up conferences. They also talked with other teachers interested in the whole language approach, met with administrators, and provided whatever general support they could.

Nearly all responding teachers (90 percent) rated the help provided by district staff developers as moderately or very helpful to their work. (This includes all the help provided by staff developers, in school and at meetings outside the school.) In addition, most of those who indicated that there was a staff developer in their school regarded the help they received from this person as moderately or very helpful. Finally, most teachers (70 percent) acknowledged getting valuable assistance during the year from their colleagues.

ROLE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Project staff expected school principals to support the whole language approach and the work of the W.L.N. teachers in their schools, and encouraged them to observe W.L.N. classrooms, facilitate teachers' visits to other whole language classrooms, and conduct some faculty meetings in the classrooms of W.L.N. teachers. Assistant principals were also expected to be supportive, and they were usually responsible for tending to the details necessary for scheduling release time.

Staff developers said that administrators received an orientation to the use of whole language during the previous school year. This year there was occasional discussion of the whole language approach at principals' meetings. One staff developer said that principals in her district sometimes requested that she give in-school workshops on whole language, which assistant principals often attended. Some administrators attended the December and summer conferences. (The December meeting featured a session specifically for administrators.)

Staff developers from the three districts characterized the support provided by school administrators and supervisors as ranging from "extremely supportive" to "lukewarm," depending on their educational philosophy and the problems, financial or otherwise, in their schools. One staff developer said the principals in his district were "generally supportive," but this year half of them were in an interim or acting position, and they needed time to learn about their schools and adjust to managing them. Another staff developer described administrators as mostly supportive, but "arrangements have been difficult" because of the budget situation. A staff developer in another district, however, was less optimistic about administrators' support, saying that "unfortunately, many don't have a clue as to what the program is about, don't visit classrooms, or involve themselves at all."

One questionnaire item asked teachers how school administrators supported the implementation of the whole language

approach this year. Nearly all respondents (94 percent) explained that administrators provided release time for participation in staff development activities, and half said that they encouraged the purchase of appropriate materials. Fewer respondents said that administrators provided planning time to collaborate with peers (24 percent) or direct instructional assistance, such as observations or conferences (18 percent). Overall, 44 percent of responding teachers rated the help provided by school supervisors as generally helpful, whereas 56 percent considered it minimally or not at all helpful.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND SATISFACTION

Teachers described how their participation in the W.L.N. during this year contributed to their professional growth or satisfaction. Many (N=16) commented on their increased knowledge about whole language or particular instructional techniques. The W.L.N., these teachers said, gave them new ideas about teaching and helped them implement these ideas in their classrooms:

- "I was exposed to new methodology which makes sense."
- "It has helped motivate me to try new ideas in my classroom."
- "By trying new and different methods, I have found out better what works better for me with my teaching style and with my specific group of children."
- "The W.L.N. enabled me to find new ways to enhance my children's lives."
- "It increased my knowledge and interest in how children learn to read...[and] exposed me to methods of teaching I had not previously known."
- "This program has changed my teaching style and given me enormous satisfaction."

Often connected to this learning of new ideas was a sense of excitement, enjoyment, or new enthusiasm for teaching. This sentiment was expressed by one-fourth of responding teachers. One teacher described herself as "more enthusiastic in my teaching, and as a result, the children are excited, too." Another said that she had been teaching for 13 years and that "if I didn't change my teaching methods I would be burned out. This gave me the incentive to teach!" A third explained, "It made me more excited about what I was doing and inspired me to do more reading, thinking, and experimenting."

One of the most important factors for many teachers in their participation in the W.L.N. was the help and support they got through interacting with colleagues in the network. The following comments are typical of the way 20 percent of the respondents described the benefits they derived from this networking:

- "I find that there is so much to be learned and shared by colleagues. Teachers are not given the opportunity to work together and share ideas."
- "By being able to speak with and listen to others who are promoting whole language instruction in their classroom, I am bolstered when facing frustration in using this method myself."
- "I can be satisfied with my teaching when I have colleagues to share my feelings and to help when I feel I need it."
- "I am extremely appreciative to be able to share in the ideas and techniques of my colleagues. I enjoyed being part of a motivating and supportive group."

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND CHANGES NEEDED

Notwithstanding the support that W.L.N. teachers received, nearly all identified areas in which they felt additional support was needed. Chief among these was the need for additional funding for the W.L.N. Other teachers emphasized the need for more materials, mainly children's literature books, as well as supplies such as art materials to implement projects. Some respondents expressed a desire to visit and observe the classes of other teachers who used a whole language approach, and the opportunity to meet with these teachers. Other needs mentioned (by fewer than five teachers in each case) were greater support and recognition from school administration, help in developing themes, and additional workshops by CIMS-CA staff developers and information about workshops given elsewhere. Staff developers expressed the need for greater understanding and involvement on the part of principals, as well as additional funds for books and stipends to teachers for attending after-school staff development activities.

Staff developers and several teachers also commented on the desirability of having students continue in a whole language approach from one year to the next and, related to this, of concentrating more W.L.N. teachers within a school. At present, most schools have only one or two W.L.N. teachers, and these do not necessarily teach contiguous grades. Therefore, students in a W.L.N. class during one school year will most likely not have a teacher who uses the whole language approach the following year.

Increasing the number of W.L.N. teachers within a school would, according to these respondents, make continuity of instruction possible for students and provide more peer support for teachers.

IV. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

WRITING

In order to assess the impact of teachers' participation in the W.L.N. on their students' achievement in writing, OREA compared samples of students' writing produced in March 1992 (pretest) with those written in June (1992) posttest* in a sample of W.L.N. classes stratified by district (C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30) and grade (K-6).

For both pre- and posttest administrations, teachers received a research protocol consisting of 1) a choice of topics (different for each grade cluster) intended to motivate students by giving them an opportunity to write about something of interest to them, 2) a "prompt" to stimulate students' thinking and provide a context for the topic, and 3) a set of general instructions designed both to ensure that the conditions under which students produced their work were uniform and to elicit optimal examples of student writing. These instructions were also keyed to the CIMS-CA curriculum insofar as they refer to the writing process by which children in the program learn to write.

For each grade cluster (K-2, 3-5, and 6-7), evaluators developed a rating scale for use in assigning an overall score to each writing sample (see Appendix A). Each point of the three

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*Personnel changes in the Division of Instruction and Professional Development, responsible for the administration of the CIMS-CA program, resulted in delays in finalizing the evaluation design and, consequently, in the administration of the pretest writing sample.

scales represented several traits or characteristics (appropriate for that grade cluster) which, viewed together, denoted a significant stage in the development of writing. Since the scales developed for the higher grade levels had to account for a more complex combination of components and a greater range and variety of writing, the scale points used for grades 3-5 and 6-7 refer to more general categories related to style and to higher-order thinking skills and questions of judgment, as opposed to the specific or concrete traits used in assessing the writing of younger students. All scales also provided for students who wrote in a language other than English at the time of the pretest. (Because of the very small number of such students, however, their scores were not included in the current analyses.)

The number of points comprising each scale, and the meaning of the numerical score values, vary depending upon the degree of elaboration or refinement needed to reflect the range and level of student writing exhibited. Consequently, while each scale point reflects a stage of development along a continuum, these points are specific to each scale and scores cannot be compared across grade clusters.

Correlated *t*-tests were used to determine whether differences between pre- and posttest scores were statistically significant. Because statistically significance is affected by sample size and does not address the issue of whether the achievement changes are important to the students' educational development, an effect size (E.S.) is reported for each

comparison to indicate whether or not the increase or decrease in scores is educationally meaningful, independent of sample size.*

As Tables 2-5 demonstrate, the mean differences between the pre- and posttest writing scores of students in grade clusters K-2 and 3-5 in all W.L.N. districts were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in view of the short time between pre- and posttest administrations (three months), the positive trends in nearly all comparisons were encouraging. Although there was no change in the scores of grade 6 students (all from one class in C.S.D. 30) and a small decrease in the scores of students in grades 3-5 in C.S.D. 11, the small sample sizes in both cases (N=22 and 29, respectively) made it difficult to make any generalizations from these findings.

It is important to note that the data presented here provide only a broad indication of students' writing skills within a limited (and contrived) context and narrow time frame. Therefore, other indicators of achievement which provide opportunities for the demonstration of skills in a variety of writing contexts and which reflect progress over an extended period of time should be taken into account. Moreover, assessment activities should provide information related to

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*The effect size is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of the improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. An E.S. of 0.2 is considered to be a small E.S.. 0.5 a moderate E.S., and 0.8 a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful, reflecting the importance of the change to the students' educational development.

Table 2

Analysis of 1992 W.L.N. Writing Samples
for All C.S.D.s by Grade Cluster

Grade	N	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
K-2	204	4.2	2.0	4.7	2.3	0.5[a]	1.4	0.3
3-5	181	3.2	1.2	3.5	1.5	0.3[b]	1.6	0.2
6[c]	22	3.4	1.4	3.4	1.0	0.0	1.3	0.0

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

[b] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .05$.

[c] All grade 6 students were from one class in C.S.D. 30.

- The mean differences between the pre- and postwriting sample scores for students in all W.L.N. districts in grade clusters K-2 and 3-5 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in view of the short time between pre- and posttest administrations (3 months), the positive trends were encouraging.

- Although there was no change in the scores of students in grade six, the small sample size made it difficult to make any generalizations based on this finding.

Table 3

Analysis of 1992 W.L.N. Writing Samples
for C.S.D. 3 by Grade Cluster

Grade	N	Pretest Mean	Pretest S.D.	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
K-2	29	4.3	1.2	4.8	1.9	0.5[a]	1.3	0.4
3-5	44	2.6	1.3	3.6	1.3	1.0[b]	1.7	0.6

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .05$.

[b] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

- The mean differences between the pre- and postwriting scores for students in grade clusters K-2 and 3-5 in C.S.D. 3 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in view of the short time between pre- and posttest administrations (3 months), the positive trends were encouraging.

Table 4

Analysis of 1992 W.L.N. Writing Samples
for C.S.D. 11 by Grade Cluster

Grade	N	Pretest		Posttest		Difference		E.S.
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
K-2	123	3.7	2.2	4.1	2.6	0.4[a]	1.4	0.3
3-5	29	2.7	1.1	2.6	1.3	-0.1	1.4	0.1

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

- The mean differences between the pre- and postwriting sample scores of students in C.S.D. 11 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in view of the short time between the test administrations (3 months), the positive trend in grade cluster K-2 was encouraging. The small sample size in grades 3-5 made it difficult to make any generalizations from the small decrease in scores.

Table 5

Analysis of 1992 W.L.N. Writing Samples
for C.S.D. 30 by Grade Cluster

Grade	N	Pretest		Posttest		Difference		E.S.
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
K-2	52	5.3	1.5	5.8	0.9	0.5[a]	1.5	0.4
3-5	108	3.6	1.1	3.7	1.5	0.1	1.5	0.1
6	22	3.4	1.4	3.4	1.0	0.0	1.3	0.0

[a] Difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

- The mean differences in the pre- and postwriting sample scores of students in grade clusters K-2 and 3-5 in C.S.D. 30 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in view of the short time between test administrations (3 months), the positive trends were encouraging.

- Although there was no change in the scores of students in grade 6, the small sample size made it difficult to make any generalizations based on this finding.

students' evolving mastery of the writing process--e.g., brainstorming, reflecting, and revising.

READING

In order to assess progress in students' reading achievement, OREA compared the differences in their spring 1991 and 1992 scores on the Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.) test. In C.S.D.s 3 and 30, analyses were conducted for all W.L.N. students in grades 3-6 for whom pre- and posttest scores were available.* In C.S.D. 11, all students in grades 3-8 were included in the reading analyses (at the request of the program director) because this district has mandated the use of CIMS-CA in all schools and grades since 1987. OREA also analyzed the D.R.P. scores of all students in grades 3-8 in C.S.D. 9 and in grades 7 and 8 in C.S.D. 8, reflecting the mandates regarding the use of CIMS-CA in these districts as well. Scores are reported in the form of Normal Curve Equivalents (N.C.E.s), norm-referenced scores which indicate how students performed in relation to a national norming sample--i.e., students in the same grade in a nationally representative sample who took the test. Since N.C.E.s are based on an equal interval scale, they can be used for arithmetic and statistical calculations, and to compare scores across different grade levels. Correlated *t*-tests were conducted to determine the statistical significance between pre-

*Since the D.R.P. was administered to students in grade 2 for the first time in spring 1991, students in grade 2 during the 1991-92 school year did not have pretest scores to serve as a basis for comparison; grades below 2 do not take this test.

and posttest scores, and an E.S. was calculated to indicate whether or not pre-post differences were educationally meaningful.

As can be seen in Tables 6-10, the mean differences in students' spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores were too small to be considered educationally meaningful (the one exception being the decrease in grade 3 in C.S.D. 3). The overall negative trends demonstrated at the elementary grade levels in all of the districts analyzed, however, reflect the decrease reported citywide in reading scores from 1991 to 1992, a year characterized by budget cuts, high turnovers in administrative and pedagogical personnel, and a markedly increased student population with large proportions of new immigrants having limited proficiency in English. Against this backdrop, the positive trends observed in grades 4, 5, and 8 in some districts were especially encouraging. The positive trend in grade 7 was consistent with the increase citywide at this grade level.

However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings. While standardized reading tests (such as the D.R.P.) provide useful information about student achievement and allow for comparisons based on uniform testing conditions and objective scoring standards, they are limited. They provide evidence of student performance at a given moment in time (typically under stressful conditions) and, since they are multiple-choice in nature, require a single "right" answer that does not

Table 6

Comparison of CIMS-CA 1991-1992 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) for C.S.D. 3[a] by Grade

Grade	N	Spring 1991 Mean	Spring 1991 S.D.	Spring 1992 Mean	Spring 1992 S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
3	19	57.3	12.8	47.6	11.8	-9.7[b]	8.3	1.2
4	21	42.1	22.5	45.2	25.4	3.1	14.5	0.2
5	24	31.5	12.0	34.2	13.6	2.7	13.3	0.2
6	27	42.8	16.1	35.4	12.7	-7.4[b]	12.3	0.6
Total	93[c]	42.2	18.4	40.0	17.3	-2.2	14.3	0.2

[a] Analyses were conducted only on W.L.N. students in this district.

[b] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

[c] Total figures include students whose grade levels were unknown.

- Overall, the mean differences between the spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. students in C.S.D. 3 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful, except for the decrease in grade 3. There was a small gain in the scores of students in grades 4 and 5, and a loss in the scores of students in grades 3 and 6, although the small sample sizes in all grade levels made it difficult to make any generalizations based on these findings.

Table 7

Comparison of CIMS-CA 1991-1992 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) for C.S.D. 30[a] by Grade

Grade	N	Spring 1991 Mean	Spring 1991 S.D.	Spring 1992 Mean	Spring 1992 S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
3	157	49.8	22.4	49.1	24.7	-0.7	12.8	0.1
4	185	59.1	26.5	59.3	23.3	0.2	16.2	0.0
5	121	71.0	20.3	69.8	21.4	-1.2	12.4	0.1
6	55	68.9	14.4	66.1	13.9	-2.8	11.7	0.2
Total	518	60.1	24.2	59.4	23.8	-0.7	13.9	0.1

[a] Analyses were conducted only on W.L.N. students in this district.

- Overall, the mean differences between the spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. students in C.S.D. 30 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, with the exception of grade 4, these scores demonstrated a negative trend.

Table 8

Comparison of CIMS-CA 1991-1992 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) for C.S.D. 9 by Grade

Grade	N	Spring 1991 Mean	Spring 1991 S.D.	Spring 1992 Mean	Spring 1992 S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
3	2,405	41.6	21.0	37.3	21.0	-4.3[a]	17.1	0.3
4	2,617	35.8	19.9	35.7	21.5	-0.1	15.3	0.0
5	2,453	40.7	22.0	38.7	20.4	-2.0[a]	14.3	0.1
6	2,216	42.0	20.6	37.4	21.5	-4.6[a]	12.5	0.4
7	2,107	39.1	20.1	40.5	18.3	1.4[a]	11.0	0.1
8	2,096	39.5	16.8	40.4	16.7	0.9[a]	8.4	0.1
Total	13,990[b]	39.6	20.3	38.2	20.2	-1.4[a]	13.9	0.1

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

[b] Total figures include students whose grade levels were unknown.

- Overall, the mean differences between the spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores of students in C.S.D. 9 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. There was, however, a positive trend in the scores of students in grades 7 and 8, and a negative trend in the scores of students in grades 3-6.

Table 9

Comparison of CIMS-CA 1991-1992 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) for C.S.D. 11 by Grade

Grade	N	Spring 1991 Mean	Spring 1991 S.D.	Spring 1992 Mean	Spring 1992 S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
3	2,125	45.4	21.7	41.8	22.3	-3.6[a]	16.0	0.2
4	2,225	44.5	21.5	47.6	23.3	3.1[a]	13.6	0.2
5	2,208	50.9	23.4	51.1	22.4	0.2	12.3	0.0
6	1,995	52.3	22.4	48.3	23.0	-4.0[a]	13.1	0.3
7	2,171	51.3	22.2	52.6	20.2	1.3[a]	10.9	0.1
8	2,050	49.7	17.6	50.8	16.5	1.1[a]	9.4	0.1
Total	12,840[b]	48.8	21.8	48.7	21.7	-0.1	13.1	0.0

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

[b] Total figures include students whose grade levels were unknown.

- Overall, the mean differences between the spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores of students in C.S.D. 11 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. There was, however, a positive trend in the scores of students in grades 4, 5, 7, and 8, and a negative trend in the scores of students in grades 3 and 6.

Table 10

Comparison of CIMS-CA 1991-1992 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) for C.S.D. 8 by Grade

Grade	N	Spring 1991 Mean	Spring 1991 S.D.	Spring 1992 Mean	Spring 1992 S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference S.D.	E.S.
7	1,658	44.5	21.7	45.9	20.1	1.4[a]	10.4	0.1
8	1,594	46.3	18.5	46.1	18.0	-0.2	9.1	0.0

[a] Mean difference was significant at $p \leq .01$.

- The mean differences between the spring 1991 and spring 1992 D.R.P. scores of students in C.S.D. 8 were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, there was a positive trend in students' scores in grade 7, and a negative trend in students' scores in grade 8.

reveal students' reasoning processes. Consequently, standardized test data should be supplemented with other sources of evidence of reading competency, including those that sample student performance over an extended period of time, require explanations, interpretations, and reactions to written text, make use of a variety of reading contexts, and present tasks that are meaningful for students.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this evaluation indicate that teachers who participated in the Whole Language Network were overwhelmingly satisfied with their progress toward implementing a whole language approach, and with the support they received in doing so.

The most valuable sources of support, according to respondents, were the CIMS-CA staff developers, who worked with W.L.N. participants in many ways. Through individual meetings with teachers, participation in group discussions at monthly meetings, and the provision of literature about whole language, staff developers helped participants--two-thirds of whom were new to the Network this year--to understand the rationale underlying the whole language approach to instruction. In order to assist these teachers in their efforts to integrate whole language strategies into their teaching practices, staff developers visited teachers' classrooms for the purpose of modeling effective teaching practices, observing students' engagement in group discussions, and reviewing samples of students' work.

Staff developers also helped teachers by working with them to integrate language arts with other subject areas through the development of interdisciplinary themes, and exploring alternative methods of assessing students' progress that are more consistent with the whole language approach. Some teachers reported assessing students' oral communication skills within the

context of class discussions, literature response groups, the retelling of stories, and regular student-teacher conferences; others used reading response logs, journals, and portfolios to evaluate progress in writing. These techniques reflect the current trend toward performance-based or "authentic" assessment, which emphasizes the assessment of student performance over time within the context of a variety of meaningful activities. It is not clear, however, precisely how teachers structured these activities or used the results--e.g., whether the questions students addressed in their journals or teachers' responses encouraged critical thinking and self-assessment.

Given the importance of high quality children's literature to whole language teaching, staff developers further supported W.L.N. teachers by helping them to select appropriate books (to be purchased with school monies), and by providing some materials with CIMS-CA funds. However, because of financial constraints, entire book sets purchased through the project could not be given to all interested teachers; instead, these materials were circulated on a loan basis. Finally, staff developers served as liaisons with school and district administrators, discussing problems and enlisting their support for the W.L.N.

Another important source of support for teachers was their peers. Through monthly meetings, conferences, and interactions in schools with other W.L.N. members, teachers had the opportunity to discuss successes and problems, and to see examples and products of other teachers' classroom activities.

Several teachers said that this was the first time in their teaching careers that they had such interactions with colleagues, and believed that more opportunities for discussion and visiting other teachers' classrooms would be beneficial.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents were not satisfied with the level of support afforded by school supervisors, which consisted primarily of arranging for the release time needed for monthly W.L.N. meetings. According to staff developers, administrators' support for the whole language approach ranged from enthusiastic to tepid. Some staff developers noted, however, that many principals were newly assigned to their position this year, and attributed their lack of active involvement in the project to the difficulties associated with assuming these new responsibilities.

Teachers' responses indicated widespread feelings of achievement and satisfaction with their participation this year in the W.L.N. Many teachers were excited about becoming familiar with and beginning to implement a pedagogical approach which they believed that great promise for learning. Others felt professionally empowered, through the education and support they received from staff developers and peers, to make their own curricular decisions. Some respondents said that they had become more open to new ideas and more flexible in their approach to teaching, which included allowing students more choices. Many teachers expressed their belief that these changes had resulted in greater student enthusiasm for learning and improved skills.

Although few W.L.N. teachers participated in the drama project this year, those who did said that the experience had been valuable for their students.

In spite of their successes and general satisfaction with W.L.N., teachers identified several areas of frustration: lack of sufficient money for materials necessary to implement the whole language approach; lack of support from school administrators; and a sense of isolation within their schools. In many cases, there was only one W.L.N. teacher in a school, and where there were two, they often taught widely separated grades, making cooperative planning difficult. A corollary of this last concern was that students who were in a W.L.N. class one year were unlikely to have a teacher who used the whole language approach the following year, resulting in a lack of instructional continuity.

Differences in students' pre- and posttest scores were generally too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, the positive trends noted in writing were encouraging, especially in view of the three-month time frame between pre- and posttest administrations. The overall negative trend in reading achievement at the elementary grade levels, while discouraging, was consistent with the decline reported in reading scores citywide from 1991 to 1992, a school year characterized by high turnovers in school personnel, budget cuts, and a marked increase in student population. Against this backdrop, the positive trend in reading scores observed in grades 4, 5, and 8 in some CIMS-CA

districts was encouraging. The positive trend in grade seven was consistent with the increase citywide at this grade level. In reviewing these findings, it is important to note that they are based on very limited samples of student performance, and provide no information about students' reasoning or evolving mastery of the learning processes necessary to becoming competent writers and readers.

Based on the evaluation findings, OREA makes the following recommendations:

- Consistent with the whole language approach, greater effort should be directed toward helping teachers incorporate alternative assessment techniques into their classroom. These techniques should involve the use of language within of authentic contexts, demonstrations of student competence with a variety of genres, and opportunities for students both to demonstrate and reflect on their own progress over time.

- As the W.L.N. continues to expand, efforts should be made both to select more teachers from the same school so as to reduce their feelings of isolation, and to add teachers of contiguous grades in order to provide greater continuity for students.

- Project staff should explore ways of increasing school supervisors' understanding of and support for the whole language approach; this might include requiring their attendance at key staff development activities.

- Since much of the success of the W.L.N. depends on teachers having appropriate materials, including children's literature and supplies for making books, project staff should continue to explore ways of making these available to teachers. This might include securing donations from publishers or alternative methods of funding.

Appendix A

Rating Scales Use for 1991-1992 CIMS-CA Writing Samples

WRITING RUBRIC
SCALE FOR KINDERGARTEN through GRADE 2
1991-92

Point	Traits
0	Illustrations
1	Ability to write names Letter strings Prompt copy
2	Beginning phonemic understanding Isolated words
3	Isolated phrases Isolated sentence Sentence finishers (emphasis on rhythm/repetition rather than sense)
4	Unrelated sentences The line is equivalent to the sentence. Little or no sense of a depersonalized reader
5	Simple related sentences Confusion in topic or syntax
6	Related sentences in paragraph format Mechanical use of linear sequence in narrative and enumeration in exposition Confusion in genre or syntax Pronominal substitution used to link sentences And or too used to link clauses When has primarily spatial and temporal functions
7	Topical development with supporting details Lacks full complement of linguistic strategies to insure coherence (sentences can be moved around; pattern of development is incomplete) Or may be too brief
8	Clear pattern of development and subordination Pronoun or noun-phrase is suppressed to integrate verbal units When used to introduce an event of a hypothetical or potential nature Complex syntactical constructions include pronomial and gerund subjects or complements Elaborate or profound content
9	Written in a language other than English

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[illegible]
WRITING ASSESSMENT
SCALE FOR GRADES 3 THROUGH 5
1991-92

Point	Traits
0	No writing or minimal writing Little or no grasp of topic Obtrusive redundance/verbal repetition Word or sentence formation may be so opaque to make understanding very difficult
1	Related to topic but sentences are confused and unclear; undeveloped Lacks logical progression or plan of organization Lacks overall coherence; seems circular Little sense of the demands of writing as distinct from oral discourse
2	Addresses the topic, providing more details Possibly intermittent coherence (contains digressions and/or gaps in narrative or omissions in exposition) Or student provides a crude list of activities or crude description Or paper is too brief Shows evident lack of self-editing/correction
3	Addresses the topic, using clear linear narrative or descriptive prose Some attempt at expository organization Clear evidence of rhetorical manipulation either through connective links, paragraphing or other "writerly" devices Content may be somewhat rote, clichéd, or superficial or paper may lack adequate supporting details Occasional problems in syntax, punctuation that interfere with understanding
4	Addresses the topic by describing characteristic or habitual activities or features or using vivid, sensuous detail; discussion has greater degree of precision, completeness, tangibility

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WRITING ASSESSMENT
SCALE FOR GRADES 6--7
1991-92

Point	Traits
1	No writing or minimal writing Little or no grasp of topic or Rambling and repetitious May be characterized by deviant word formation and syntax. Inadequate grammatical and syntactical control affects sense/meaning comprehension.
2	Lacks general plan (that is relevant to the question) or is rather brief May be dominated by lists or inventories Unorganized; persistent non sequiturs Lacks adequate contextualization
3	Generally without surface error: minor grammatical or scribal errors Organizational competence: generally shows clear pattern such as chronological or spatial sequence, or use of topical or expository categories Some evidence of linkages/connectives and other rhetorical devices, such as paragraphing, to demarcate different and/or related topics Components have no necessary relation to each other or to an overall thesis Paper does not come to some conclusion
4	Implicit thesis or unity of conception Interesting focus (not clichéd) or Content is clichéd, somewhat superficial, but well-developed Conclusion is vague and unsupported
5	Work shows sophisticated, somewhat elaborated structure Style as expressive either of the writer or of the subject matter; unusual vocabulary Error does not detract from competence Depending on the topic, certain papers come to a real conclusion or provide solution(s) to a stated problem
6	Writing is in a language different from English

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5 Student utilizes more sophisticated devices to structure the narrative
Conscious deployment of rhetorical strategy
Variety of supporting details often utilizing interesting or advanced vocabulary
Error does not detract from overall competence

Writing shows distinctive point of view and overall unity of structure; student is far more likely to subordinate narrative or detail to a thesis
Syntactic complexity
Semantic maturity
Occasional error does not dispell the power of the work

7 Writing is in a language different from English

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